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Improvement of food safety system in the Republic of Azerbaijan

On February 10, 2017, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a decree on “additional measures with respect to the improvement of food safety system in the Republic of Azerbaijan” (“Decree”).

The decree aims at improving a control system over the food safety in the country, the transparency, eliminating disunity and duplication in this regard as well as providing realization of the measures set forth in “Strategic Road Map on Production and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan” approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 6 December 2016.

As in accordance with this Decree, Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (“Agency”) is established to deal with the following matters:

- ▶ normative regulation of food safety (preparation and approval of sanitary norms and rules as well as hygiene regulations);
- ▶ risk analysis, hygienic certification matters, issuance of quality certificate for the food products intended to export to foreign countries;
- ▶ state control at all stages of food products production in accordance with the risk level of product on the basis of “farm-to-table” principle as well as in protecting the rights of food products’ consumers.

In accordance with the Decree, Food Safety Commission (“Commission”) was established to provide functioning of the Agency. The following staff of the Commission was appointed:

a) Head of the Commission:

- ▶ Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan

b) Members of the Commission:

- ▶ Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Minister of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Minister of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Head of the State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Patent of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Head of the State Committee for Property Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- ▶ Head of the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The Commission shall provide the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan the draft charter of the Commission and proposals on the structure and a general number of staff of the Agency within 4 months period.

The Agency will start functioning on January 1st, 2018 and the competences of the Commission will expire on the same date.

According to the Decree, the Cabinet of Ministers is designated to:

- ▶ prepare draft law on “Food Safety” taking into consideration international practice and submit it to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan within 6 months period;
- ▶ prepare draft of “State Program on providing food safety for 2018–2025 in the Republic of Azerbaijan” and submit it to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan within 6 months period;
- ▶ provide appointing the Agency as the National Contact Point of Codex Alimentarius Commission in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

“State Program on providing food safety for 2018–2025 in the Republic of Azerbaijan” shall be based on the following priority directions:

- ▶ ensuring compliance of normative legal acts concerning food products safety as well as standards, norms and rules on sanitary, phytosanitary, veterinary with the International Convention on Plant Protection and standards and requirements of Codex Alimentarius Commission and World Organization for Animal Health;
- ▶ ensuring compliance of food products conformity assessment system with international requirements;
- ▶ conducting classification of food products on the basis of risk groups (low, medium and high-level risk) and identifying risk assessment criteria in accordance with international practice;
- ▶ improving control system over circulation of GMOs and their derivatives;
- ▶ preparation and realization of control system and mechanisms at all stages of food production in accordance with the risk level of product on the basis of “farm-to-table” principle;
- ▶ strengthening personnel’s potential in the field of food safety;
- ▶ strengthening and modernizing material-technical base with respect to safety of food products (expanding laboratories network and international accreditation of laboratories).

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